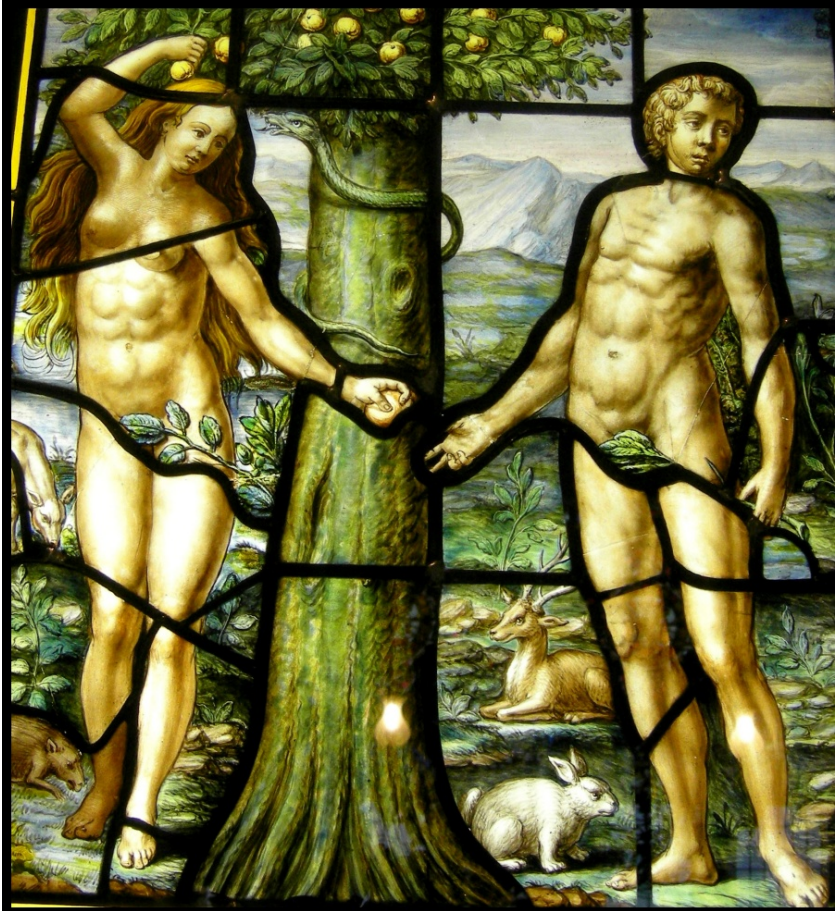
The Fall of Man and Original Sin



by Father Bernard Vincent Miller

Introduction

Toward Paradise our thoughts turn, year after year, wistfully and in vain. The world changes in many ways, acquires new habits of living and thinking, and grows proud of its control over the forces of nature; but the road back to the happiness of those days when Adam and Eve "walked with God" through gardens in which death had no power is lost forever. Too often, however, we attribute to our first parents a great deal for which their disobedience was not at all responsible. The sin that enters our own. lives, darkening the bliss of those among whom we live and shutting off the current of the grace of God, is frequently our own fault and not just merely the outcome of the temptation to which Eve succumbed.

The consequences of the Fall in Paradise could not be removed until Christ the Saviour was born into this world and suffered the death of the Cross. His Divine tragedy constantly reminds us of the greatness of Adam's transgression, which nothing might wipe out except infinite sacrifice. And yet, how can we ignore the fact that, in spite of Bethlehem and the Last Supper, of the Sermon on the Mount and Calvary's last words, the universe we build about us every day (with hands that Christ has pressed into His own) is blotted, with selfishness and anger, lack of pity and desire for pleasure? The Church, speaking of the fall of Adam and Eve, terms it a "blessed fault," in view of the fact that it brought the Son of God to earth. But no fault of ours is blest or pardonable excepting through Endless Mercy, because our eyes have seen the Man of Sorrows.

Father Miller, who has written the excellent little treatise which follows, admits that his topic is not pleasant and, in some respects, not easy to understand. It is not pleasant for the reason that it reminds one of human frailty; it is difficult to grasp because it involves some of the deepest of Christian doctrines - grace, redemption, ultimate salvation. Nevertheless it is most salutary and also, in a definite way, beautiful to contemplate. Anybody who follows carefully the more or less theological argument here presented cannot help being impressed by the absolute perfection of the reasoning, and is likely to feel that teaching so eminently

reasonable must be true. This is because the work is not original with Father Miller, but is quite truly the crystallized product of centuries of Catholic vision and reflection. The reader may find that hitherto he has been in error concerning one or the other point. It would be difficult to explain the effect of baptism, for instance, more clearly or reasonably than is done here.

A Christian apologist who is given the task of presenting so vast a problem to the understanding of the faithful may rightly expect to be read in the proper spirit. Father Miller writes as a man who has faith. Little time is wasted upon an attempt to "reconcile" dogma with diverse theories about primitive man which have come to the fore with modern study of the prehistoric world. This is quite as it should be. The Christian remains conscious, first of all, of the chaos in his own breast. There a struggle is in progress, out of which grace alone can wrest a victory. Why all this is so has been explained in the books of Revelation as fully and lucidly as it can be until we see "face to face." And as we read the account of the sin committed by our common father and mother, pondering meanwhile the commentary affixed to the narrative by the Church, our attitude toward them becomes one of sympathetic understanding and love. In them are all the human traits, both noble and weak, which we find in ourselves. More important, however, is the eternal truth that over them God lived as a Father, loving and forgiving them as He does us.

- George N Shuster
- Associate Editor, The Commonweal

Adam Before His Fall

The study of the dogma of the fall of man and its corollary, original sin, is interesting from many points of view. If we look at its first beginnings at the dawn of human history, and its echoes or analogies or counterparts, whichever they be, that are found in the traditions, myths, and legends of many ancient peoples, we are led into a vast field of research in which, of late years, many scholars of eminence have busied themselves, and where, only too often imagination and the desire to justify preconceived theories have taken the place of argument and sound reasoning upon sure evidence.

If we confine our attention to the course of the dogma within the Church, we are introduced to some of the greatest names in the Church's story, and to some of the movements and controversies that have cut the deepest traces across her history. The Pelagians, in the fifth century, struck at the very roots of the supernatural life and religion, but though their fundamental heresy was concerned with grace, their denial of original sin, which of necessity followed, became one of the pivotal points around which controversy ranged, and afforded the Catholic champion, Saint Augustine, matter for much thought and many writings.

In the sixteenth century the Protestant religious leaders did not indeed, deny the doctrine of original sin - many of them, in fact, exaggerated it; but while they kept the sound form of words, they understood them in a new way, and the nature of their doctrinal content was altered and degraded. Since then the process of disintegration has been carried to its logical end, especially of late years, under the influence of the theory of evolution. This, in its extreme form, necessitates the biblical story of Adam and Eve being looked upon as a myth, or at best, as a piece of mere folklore enshrining some spiritual truths. Consequently, while many Protestants deny the doctrine of the fall altogether, others, less bold, less logical, but more ingenious, retain the old phraseology, but interpret it in the sense of a lapse or a series of lapses in primitive and brutelike man's struggle towards higher things. We have even been told, in all seriousness, that the fall was a "fall

upwards." Original sin, then becomes nothing but the deep impress of man's animal nature upon his slowly dawning spiritual consciousness.

To meet these adversaries is the apologist's task, not ours. Our aim is much more modest. We have to take for granted the Church's authority and her interpretation of the sacred Scriptures given into her care. Upon this sure foundation we have simply to build an edifice of doctrinal exposition and explanation, setting in view what the Church means by and teaches in the dogma of the fall and original sin; and gathering together and explaining, as best we can, its various theological consequences and implications. The task is not without its difficulties; it should not be without some interest to those who have an appreciation of the things of faith, and it may have some small apologetic value as showing the utter reasonableness of the Catholic teaching, both in itself and in its close relations with other fundamental articles of Catholic belief.

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To understand man's fall we must know whence he fell and what his condition was before he fell.

The tradition of a golden age at the beginning of man's history is widespread; recent investigations have shown it to be almost universal among the races, nations, and tribes of men throughout the world. The existence of this tradition might, perhaps, be taken as evidence in favour of the Christian belief in man's original state of innocence and happiness, since the trend of historical research is to show that there is always some foundation of fact for ancient, deep-rooted, and widespread traditions. But even if we allow the fullest possible weight to this piece of evidence, it amounts to very little, for the tradition, varying from race to race and tribe to tribe, is so much overgrown and corrupted by fable, myth, and legend that the core of truth, even if it could be with certainty discovered and determined, would be too slight and vague to be of any real use.

We have however, a surer and purer source of information. Just as the story of the creation told in the Hebrew sacred writings is far superior in its noble purity and religious simplicity to the

complicated and often immoral myths and legends preserved in the books of other ancient. peoples, so likewise does the biblical account of the primitive happiness of the first man and woman surpass all the legends of a golden age which the traditions and folklore of other nations have handed down to us.

It is not for us to vindicate the historical character of this narrative against the view, so widely prevalent outside the Church, that it is simply another, even if a superior, piece of ancient folklore. As to the method of interpretation, something has been said in Volume VI of this series, *God the Creator*. Here we need only note the decision given by the Biblical Commission in 1909 when deciding certain questions about the historical character of the first three chapters of Genesis. The third question was "whether in particular the literal, historical character can be called in question when things are narrated touching the foundations of the Christian religion, such as among others . . . the original happiness of our first parents in a state of justice, integrity, and immortality; the command laid upon man by God to test his obedience; the transgression of the divine command through the persuasion of the devil under the appearance of a serpent; the fall of our first parents from that primitive state of innocence; and the promise of a future Redeemer?" The answer is in the negative.

It is therefore to this inspired record, guaranteed by the Church's authority, and confirmed by many other parts of sacred Scripture, that we go as our principal source of information for all that concerns man's state when first God had breathed into him the breath of life. This decree of the Biblical Commission says that, according to the literal, historical sense of the record in Genesis, our first parents before their fall were endowed with the three qualities of justice, integrity, and immortality. What these were and how exactly they are to be understood we must now examine.

We need not here, however, say much about the first, though it is quite the most important, for it is fully explained in other volumes of this series. It is only necessary to note that the word *justice*, as here used, means first and principally the supernatural gift of sanctifying grace, which raised Adam to a higher state and nobler dignity, which put him into a relationship of real friendship with

God in this life, and gave him the pledge of eternal happiness in the closest union with him in the next.

But of the other two qualities mentioned we must speak at greater length. These, immortality and integrity, are called preternatural gifts. This term is used to show that, although these qualities did not belong to Adam by virtue of his human nature, and were no part of that bodily and mental equipment necessary to his being and life as man, and although, therefore, they were bestowed upon him of God's sheer benevolence, as something over and above his purely human faculties and capacities, yet they did not put him, as grace did, into a different and altogether higher order of existence. They gave him additional and greater perfection without raising him above the purely human level.

We take first the gift of immortality. "And he (God) commanded him, saying: Of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat: but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death." (Genesis 2:16-17) Then in the next chapter, after Adam had eaten of the forbidden tree, God lays upon him the punishment of his sin, a life of hard toil to be ended by death; "for dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return." (Genesis 3:19) Whence it is clear that death was positively the penalty of Adam's sin, and that if he had not sinned he would not have had to die. He was made to be immortal. This was the traditional belief of the Jews. As a modern writer well puts it: "This penal sense of death colours all that the Old Testament says of man's end. It is in its thoughts where it is not in its words. It is the background of pathetic passages in which the immediate subject is the misery or the transiency of life, rather than death itself. It gives to the thought of death, as it is expressed, for example, in the goth Psalm, and to those lamentations over man's frailty and the grave's rapacity which recur in the Psalter and the Prophets, in Ecclesiastes and in Job, a meaning and an elevation which such things have not in ethnic literatures, the best of which know death only as a thing of nature, and know it not in its relation to sin and to the wrath of God." (Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*)

Saint Paul's clear teaching on the matter, in the epistle to the Romans, is well known to all, and, as we shall have to deal with it

later, his witness need not be quoted here. More than once the Church has had occasion to define her faith upon this subject against heretical errors, notably in the Council of Trent, where in Canon I, Session V, they are condemned who deny that Adam by "the offence of this prevarication incurred the wrath and indignation of God, and therewith death, with which God had previously threatened him." In other words, had Adam not sinned he would not have died; made to be immortal, he brought death upon himself as the punishment of his sin.

Closely connected with this gift of immortality was that of impassibility or freedom from pain and suffering. It is the common teaching of theologians that Adam enjoyed this privilege, but it is not a part of Catholic faith, for it has neither been defined by the Church, nor is it explicitly taught in the sacred Scriptures. It is, however, easily deduced from the sentence passed by God upon Adam and Eve after they had sinned. In this matter all exaggeration must be avoided. It is not necessary to suppose that Adam was wholly incapable of feeling pain; the possession of impassibility simply means that he was secured against all those pains and evils which are directly and indirectly, the consequence of sin, ignorance and folly.

Theologians commonly also hold that Adam was endowed with knowledge infused by God, and not acquired by the exercise of his human faculties. Here also a warning against exaggeration is not out of place, for some; indulging their love of ingenious speculation, have credited him with possessing an all-embracing wisdom. Scripture gives us no explicit information on this point, and the Church has decided nothing. But from general principles it may be safely concluded that, at the moment of Adam's creation, God infused into his mind the knowledge which, though he had had no chance of acquiring it for himself, was necessary to enable him to lead a properly ordered human life. More than this it would, perhaps, be unwise to assert. Undoubtedly also God endowed him with excellent mental faculties and powers of observation, by which he would be able to equip himself quickly with all necessary and convenient knowledge.

The other preternatural quality mentioned in the Biblical

Commission's decree as belonging to Adam before his fall is of even greater importance than the gift of immortality. Theologically it is called integrity, which, first and foremost, consists in the total absence of concupiscence. In modern English concupiscence is generally understood as applying only to fleshly desire; it is usually restricted to that field wherein it is most violent. But in theological language the word is of much wider application. It indicates any and every motion or impulse of the lower, the sensitive and imaginative, faculties or appetites of man's nature that is not under the perfect rule and dominion of his higher faculties, reason and will. All our faculties and appetites, even the lowest, are from God and are good in themselves. They tend naturally to find satisfaction in their appropriate acts, and this tendency in itself is good. Above all man's sensitive faculties stand his reason and will, his noblest natural endowments, which should govern and direct all his actions if he is to live rightly and worthily as a man. In the possession of these lies essentially his human dignity, by these he is raised immeasurably above all the lower animals. As his highest faculties they have the natural right of dominion over the lower elements of his nature. Experience, however, proves that this dominion is by no means absolute. Our sensitive and imaginative faculties are so quickly and so strongly excited to action that, even when they do not overcome the rational will and lead it captive, as too often happens, they can be dominated and regulated by it only with much effort and often painful striving. 'For I do not that good which I will, but the evil which I hate, that I do. . . . For to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do. . . . I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law of God according to the inward man; but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members." (Romans 7:15-23)

This unhappy state so vividly pictured by Saint Paul is called the state of concupiscence. Every impulse of man's lower nature not in accord with the dictates of his reason and the urge of his will is a manifestation of concupiscence; it is a proof of the two-sidedness of his nature not yet brought into a perfect oneness or wholeness of activity - a proof, that is, of the absence of *integrity*.

Adam, before his sin, did not suffer from concupiscence; he was gifted with integrity. Although this has not been explicitly, in so many words, defined by the Church, the Council of Trent clearly presupposes it when, in the fifth canon on original sin, it says that concupiscence is sometimes called sin because it arises from sin and inclines man to sin; whence it follows that before there was sin in Adam there was no concupiscence in him.

This is very simply and delicately expressed in the second chapter of Genesis. Eve, fresh from God's creative hand, is presented to Adam, "and they were both naked and were not ashamed." Shame arises when a person is overcome by an enemy whom he ought to have conquered, or when the danger of defeat just escaped has brought him a lively sense of ‘his unworthy weakness. So the inspired writer in noting that Adam and Eve were not ashamed, despite their nakedness, wishes to indicate that they felt no undue, disordered impulse of the strongest of sensitive appetites, that their reason and will held such complete and easy rule that they felt no weakness and had no cause for shame. But having sinned, as we read a little farther on, they at once experienced the sense of shame, caused by the unruly urge of passion, and covering their nakedness, tried thus to lessen the danger to which they now felt themselves exposed.

To prevent misunderstanding, we may add that, in exempting Adam from concupiscence, we by no means deny to him the enjoyment of all the pleasures of sensitive life. Saint Thomas, (*Summa Theologica*) indeed, teaches that, in his state of innocence, he enjoyed these even more than we do, since his natural faculties were purer and therefore keener. But the whole of his sensitive life and activity was in complete subjection to the rule of his reason.

Such, then, was the condition of our first parents when they came from the hand of God. They were in a state of supernatural grace, they were free from all concupiscence, and they were. not subject to death. These three points belong to the deposit of faith, guaranteed by the Church's authority. Further, it is common theological teaching, though not a part of Catholic faith, that they were free from all pain and suffering, and possessed some measure, impossible to determine, of divinely given or infused knowledge.

About their material circumstances, their culture and civilisation, we know practically nothing. The Bible seems to show that they led a life of great simplicity, God's bounty supplying all their needs with but little trouble on their part. But however interesting this question may be to our human curiosity, it has no theological importance. From this point of view all we need to know is that they were capable of leading a really human life, however simple.

Now a question arises with a direct bearing upon the doctrine, to be expounded later, of original sin. We have seen what Adam's condition was at the beginning of his life, but, although we have spoken of his endowments as supernatural and preternatural, in so doing we have been guilty, in reality, of begging the question, for we have not determined. whether these endowments did really and of right belong to him as man, or were something given to him over and above his natural due. The question is both important and delicate. Its importance, which will become clearer as we proceed, lies in this that, if Adam's endowments, as already described, were natural, then, since by his sin he lost them both for himself and for us, it will follow that man's nature now is intrinsically and essentially vitiated by being deprived of some elements originally proper to it; it will therefore be in itself an evil thing. This is, in fact, the position taken by many of the early Protestant theologians, and later maintained by the Jansenists. If, on the other hand, these endowments were something given to Adam over and above all that went to make up his full manhood, then it follows that, in spite of their loss, human nature remains complete, in essence unimpaired by original sin, intrinsically whole and good in itself.

The delicacy of the problem lies in determining with accuracy what is meant by the word *natural*, and by its correlatives, supernatural and preternatural. Some little has already been said, but more careful definition is now necessary. The word *natural* has many meanings. It would be but a waste of time to enquire into most of them. We shall confine ourselves to the strict theological sense in which theologians use the word when treating of this present question, and of all matters touching the doctrine of grace. And for the sake of clearness and brevity we shall speak of man alone among all creatures.

It is clear that man, to be man, to answer to the idea of man eternal in God's mind, must be made according to a certain definite pattern. He must consist of body and soul, and must be endowed with certain faculties, capacities, and powers. All these are his natural constituent elements, properties; and possessions, and in their sum make up a complete human nature. Further, to keep him in life and to give due play to his powers many other things are necessary. He cannot live without food and air, for example; these, therefore, though not a part of his being, though external to him, are yet natural to him, a part of his natural surroundings and requirements. Again, the powers that God has given him as elements in his nature, especially his intellectual powers, are of such vast stretch and grasp that, to provide them with enough to work upon with some sort of satisfaction, a whole universe of almost immeasurable immensity, complexity, beauty, ingenuity, intricacy, harmony has been created by God for his dwelling-place and workshop. All this created universe is man's natural environment and inheritance, and all that he can do with it and all his discoveries in it are his natural achievements and attainments. So, to take an example, though countless millions of men have lived full human lives without being able to fly, flying is quite natural to man, since it has come about by the application of his own innate powers to the material objects and forces of the created world.

But by the exercise of these same powers without any outside help he can rise still higher, soaring above the created world to the Creator himself. He can gain an extensive knowledge of God and his nature and conceive for him a real love. That this is possible to man's unaided natural powers - at least, as regards the knowledge of God - was defined by the Vatican Council.

Taking into consideration; therefore, all these points, we conclude by defining as natural to man all that goes to his making and being, all that is possible to his unaided powers, all that is necessary for the due and sufficient satisfaction and activity of his innate appetites and faculties. With this in mind we can answer the question put above.

The truly supernatural character of grace will be found fully explained elsewhere in this book series. Now it is enough to note

that the Church teaches that, while God could have left Adam with his own natural powers to work out his own natural end by the unaided exercise of the powers, he did in fact destine him for an end infinitely beyond the reach and exigencies of these powers left to themselves. This end was an unending life of perfect happiness, produced by immediate union with and direct sight of the very being of God, by the beatific vision, as it is called in Catholic phraseology. And for the preparation for and meriting of this supernatural end God gave Adam a new nature and life, the supernature and supernatural life of sanctifying grace. Beyond this we need not go, but shall confine our attention to the gifts of immortality and integrity.

Adam's immortality was, in reality, only potential, not actual - that is, it was something that would have been given to him if he had observed the conditions accompanying God's promise of it, but of which he was deprived owing to his failure to observe them. This is fairly clear from an attentive study of the second chapter of Genesis, where it is explicitly stated that the fruit of one tree will bring death, and implied that the result of eating of the other, when God should allow it, would be unending life. Therefore, while death was truly the penalty for Adam's sin, it was a penalty that consisted in not giving a conditionally promised additional privilege, but not in taking away something already held by natural right. Death, therefore, was Adam's natural lot; immortality was not natural to him. So we find that when Michael du Bay, a theologian of Louvain, taught that "the immortality of the first man was not a free gift but his natural condition," this teaching was condemned by Saint Pius V in 1567. (Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, No. 1078)

As Saint Augustine well expresses it: "It is one thing not to be able to die, as is the case with some beings (viz., the angels) whom God created; but it is another thing to be able not to die, which was the way the first man was made immortal; his immortality came from the tree of life, not from his natural constitution. He was mortal therefore by the condition of his animal nature, but immortal by the free gift of his Creator." (*De Genesi ad litteram*, Bk. VI, ch. 15)

Yet immortality cannot be called strictly supernatural, for it does not raise man's life to a level above itself, but only prolongs it, in its

own order, along the line of duration. Hence it is called by theologians a preternatural gift.

The preternatural character of Adam's freedom from concupiscence is not, at first sight, so clear. For it would seem that, in a state of sinlessness, there ought to exist perfect harmony between the various elements of man's nature, and that the lower ought to be in: complete subjection to the higher. But, without going deeply into the psychology of the matter, we may point out that concupiscence is a natural effect of man's dual nature, of his having two kinds of appetites, sensitive and rational. Between the objects of sense and of reason there must often, of necessity, be opposition, and since the sensitive faculties and appetites are directly, easily, and strongly excited and stimulated by external objects; it comes about inevitably that they begin to act without the co-operation or the consent of the reason, and that sometimes they act so forcefully as to put the reason to great stress before it can impose its power of control. Concupiscence, therefore, is a natural concomitant of man's composite being, and integrity a special and free gift of God, but preternatural and not strictly supernatural, as it does not raise man's nature above itself to a higher level of being or action.

This happy state in which our first parents were created, and which we have been describing, did not continue. Instead of enjoying this blissful condition of life, when Adam dwelt in God's intimate friendship, untroubled by pain or sorrow or the assaults of concupiscence or the doom of impending death, man is now born into sorrow, lives in suffering, is overwhelmed with concupiscence, sins much and often, and even with death and the threat of damnation hanging over him, finds it hard to remember God, to live in his presence and to love him. Whence comes the change? Only revelation can enlighten us, and we have now to see what it teaches.

Adam's Fall

In treating of Adam's fall various points must be carefully distinguished. First we must establish the fact of his sin, determine with accuracy, as far as possible, in what it consisted, and enquire how he came to commit it. Then we must consider what effect his sin had upon Adam himself, and finally we shall have to see how it affected his posterity. In this chapter we shall treat of the fact, the nature and the motive of Adam's sin.

That it belongs to the Catholic faith, as defined by the Church, that Adam sinned, is too well known to need any elaboration. But we have to enquire what exactly this means. Two conditions are necessary for there to be a sin against God. ‘The first is that there must be a command imposed by God, whose authority and right to command are supreme; the second is that he who is bound by this command must deliberately and consciously transgress it. The narrative of Genesis makes it quite clear that in Adam's case both of these conditions were fulfilled. God imposed upon him the command to abstain from the tree of life; Adam deliberately broke the command, and so sinned. But the fact of his sinning, which stands out so clearly, raises some interesting matters which, though not affecting directly the substance of the faith, will help to put it in a reasonable and easily acceptable setting.

In the first place, we may note that, according to many accredited theologians and exegetes, it is not necessary to understand in a literal sense the prohibition against eating the fruit of some particular tree. We may take it, without offence, as a vivid but symbolical way of representing God's command which may have been of some wholly different character. But, on the other hand, there is no good reason compelling us to give up the literal acceptation of this narrative. Since God wished to try Adam by testing his obedience, by laying upon him some positive command over and above the natural law, it seems a matter of indifference what form the command should take or what thing should be commanded or forbidden. And in view of the conditions of Adam's life, it seems altogether suitable that the prohibition should fall upon the fruit of some one tree among the many whence he gained

his sustenance. Then, inevitably, the question suggests itself: Why should God wish to impose such a prohibition upon him? If he had been left with nothing but the natural law to obey, it would have been much easier to avoid sin. Why did God make obedience harder?

It is evident that God's prohibition put a limit to Adam's liberty and narrowed the range of his lordship over the rest of the visible creation. This points the way to the answer to our question, for it was most fitting that man, so splendidly endowed and ennobled by God, should make some offering, some sacrifice of what he had received, as an acknowledgement of his indebtedness to God for all he had, and as a sign of his ready obedience and entire submission to his Creator. And what better sacrifice could he offer than that of his will and his freedom? God therefore laid this command upon Adam, with the condition that disobedience would bring about the loss of those supernatural and preternatural gifts that had been bestowed upon him, which implies necessarily that obedience would have meant their retention until the time should have come for him to be taken from this world into the life of heavenly glory. There was, therefore, an implied pact or covenant between God and Adam, the observance of which by Adam was a grave obligation, for God's will is the highest law, and it was his will that Adam should pass from this life into the beatific vision; he was therefore bound to keep those means which God had given him for the attainment of that end, to wit, sanctifying grace and its concomitants. Turning now from the command to its transgression, we are faced with another and a more difficult question. How came it about that Adam, in all the circumstances of his holiness, his happiness, his spiritual and intellectual clear-sightedness, his intimacy with God, could possibly sin? The question has intrigued enquirers for ages. Many answers have been given, and if none are wholly satisfactory, some are much less wise and cautious than others. It is of no use to make Adam's sin consist in any act involving the insurgence of concupiscence, for, as we have seen, this had no place in him. This consideration at once disposes of many answers that have been suggested, and at the same time cuts away the ground from all those who attack and ridicule the faith because of the disproportion between the price of an apple and eternal life. Again, we shall not go far towards a solution of the

problem if we look at Adam's sin as simply a matter of ordinary morality, as a mere disobedience, for in view of his perfect moral state and unclouded spiritual perception, it is more than hard to understand how he could, in such a simple case, have fallen. We must go deeper.

The first thing to note is the intrinsic possibility of sin. This, as is explained elsewhere, is a necessary accompaniment of the possession of freewill in the absence of the vision of God face to face. Then also, Adam was in a state of probation, and therefore, with God's permission, subject to temptation by Satan. His position was one of wonderful dignity and nobility. He had no equal upon the earth, none even to come near him in power and honour and endowments. All living things were subject to him. He was lord of all. But he was not supreme. God was above him, and God had restricted his freedom of action by forbidding him to touch one tree. Then to him came Satan, speaking through the serpent, and asking why he did not eat of that tree.

"Why should so noble a being as you suffer such a restriction upon your liberty? Eat of the tree, break through the bonds imposed upon you, let your freedom be unfettered. Become as God yourself, knowing all things and daring all; be subject to no one, have no master; be lord of yourself, serving none other." In some such way, as the sacred writer himself indicates, the temptation entered into Adam's mind. There is in it no insurgence of concupiscence, no mere simple disobedience to a moral percept; but there is the sheer rebellion of mind and will against the ultimate supernatural claims and rights of God. It is the elementary conflict between the natural and the supernatural, which must always be possible to created freedom, until all its capacities and desires are fully extended and satisfied by the immediate possession of the Infinite Good in the beatific vision.

Let it be noted that this explanation in no way goes against the scriptural narrative, which is almost wholly confined to outward things, whereas we have tried, following Saint Thomas, (*Summa Theologica*) to go below the surface. We may still marvel at the apparent ease with which Adam fell, but we must remember that only the outlines of the position and circumstances have been

revealed to us. If we knew more of his life during the time preceding the fall, how long it lasted, more of the actual circumstances of the temptation and of Satan's subtle and persuasive arguments, much that now puzzles us might become clear. Meanwhile we accept the fact on God's authority, and pass on to examine the effects produced in Adam by his sin.

Adam After His Fall

The Council of Trent sums up under one canon the Catholic teaching about the immediate effects produced in Adam by his sin, to wit, that he lost the sanctity and justice in which he had been established, that he incurred the wrath and indignation of God, and thereby death, likewise captivity under the power of the devil, and that both as to soul and body he was changed for the worse. (Session V, Can. I.) That Adam lost his holiness and justice is too clear to need any long demonstration. It is at the root of the whole of Catholic teaching on the Redemption. One of the themes running all through Saint Paul's epistles is that Jesus Christ, the second Adam, died to regain for us what the first Adam had lost, and that through his redemptive and re-creative work we are revivified by sanctifying grace, and become, by adoption, the sons of God. This is what the second Adam won for us; this is what the first Adam lost.

And, indeed, such a loss is easily seen to be inevitable. Adam's original condition of holiness constituted a special relationship with God. He was destined to a supernatural end; he was given the means of attaining it; he was given, that is to say, a higher life principle in his soul, sanctifying grace. This higher life, now here on earth, and still more, of course, its perfection in the next world, postulates and implies conformity between man's mind and will and God's, for it consists in the close union of the soul and the soul's activity with the divine life. But where there is disunion of wills there can be no oneness of life. Adam, therefore, by putting his will in opposition to God's, deprived himself necessarily of this union with and sharing in the divine life, which is sanctifying grace. By his sin he also lost his preternatural gifts of immortality and integrity. The threat of death was over him, to fall if he disobeyed God. The natural law of death was conditionally suspended; but as the result of his sin it was allowed to work itself out, the conditional promise of immortality was cancelled, and death came into the world; "by one man sin entered into this world and through sin death." (Romans 5:12)

Here we may be forgiven a reference to an objection which of recent years has become a common one. It is urged that Saint Paul's

teaching about the origin of death is clearly erroneous since science has proved that death stalked through the world for countless ages before man appeared on the earth. It is hard to believe that such an objection can be seriously made. Those who bring it are, as a rule, ready enough to find an acceptable interpretation of any passage of Scripture, even at the risk of distortion, if it will agree with their theories, or if the literal sense offends their own susceptibilities. The only reason for not using some like indulgence here would seem to be that they are only too well pleased to be able to attack the inerrancy of the Bible. For to the unprejudiced reader it is evident that the only world Saint Paul is here thinking about is the world of men. His subject is sin and grace which affect men only; he is outlining the spiritual history of mankind, and therefore the only death he speaks of is the death of men, not that which is the lot of all the brute creation.

The biblical story of the fall makes it equally clear that Adam lost his integrity or freedom from concupiscence. We have already, in describing his endowments, said enough about this to dispense us from any further elaboration of it.

The Council of Trent mentions also, as an effect of Adam's sin, "captivity under the power of the devil," but it will be more convenient to deal with this in the next chapter and to go on now to a matter of greater difficulty.

Did the effects of Adam's sin reach beyond his supernatural and preternatural gifts, and penetrate into the very core of his human nature so as to spoil and vitiate, to poison and infect, the substance of his being? We are speaking of the direct and immediate effects of his sin, not of those which might, conceivably, have followed from a long course of indulgence in sin, if he had not at once repented, as Catholic tradition supposes him to have done.

Certain enactments of some early Church councils, as well as the Council of Trent, seem, at first sight, to teach that it was so. For example, the second Council of Orange, held in 529 to combat Pelagianism, lays down in its first canon that "anyone who holds that Adam was not wholly, that is, both in body and soul, changed for the worse, but that his liberty of soul remaining uninjured, his body alone was made liable to corruption, is deceived by the error

of Pelagius and contradicts Scripture"; and again, in the eighth canon, it speaks of the will being vitiated. The Council of Trent, as we have seen, speaks, at the end of the canon describing the effects of his sin, of the "whole Adam, both as to body and soul, being changed for the worse." Theologians commonly, in summing up this teaching, speak of Adam being deprived of his supernatural, and wounded in his natural endowments.

The right interpretation of these decrees is a matter of the greatest importance, for it has serious consequences. We may first of all, for the sake of completeness, set aside an extreme opinion which no Catholic could ever hold, but which was the position taken by Luther, Calvin, and Jansen, and is still set forth in some Protestant formularies. The foundation of this opinion is the denial of the reality of sanctifying grace as a supernatural gift and the consequent assertion that Adam's condition, before his fall, was purely natural. After his fall, therefore, it will follow that his nature was intrinsically depraved and corrupted, and a thing evil in itself. This is a fatal and truly horrible teaching. It means that every human act is of itself and in itself evil. It makes man to be a sink of moral corruption by nature. Natural virtue becomes impossible, and unregenerate man can do nothing of himself but sin. Needless to say, the Church has more than once condemned this doctrine, which is a blasphemy against God's goodness. But even among those who fully admit the Catholic teaching about the supernatural character of Adam's original state, traces of this Protestant and Jansenist poison are sometimes to be found. There are those who, while, indeed, keeping clear of the heretical errors just mentioned, yet speak of man's nature having been in some way positively infected, and possessing in itself a positive and natural inclination to evil. Various explanations are given as to how this comes about and in what it consists. It will be enough to speak of one. It has been suggested that Adam, in sinning, produced some sort of cataclysmic disturbance in the depths of his hitherto harmonious being, a disturbance that upset everything, clouding his intellect, weakening his will, and violently inflaming his passions, so that even his restoration to grace was powerless to restore his shattered natural forces. The only comment that needs to be made upon this suggestion is that it is imaginary and improbable. There is no trace of authority for it, and when we recall that, to fall, Adam had to

commit but one sin and not a whole series going on for months or years, and that his sin, being in the intellectual order, was unaccompanied by any violent movements of concupiscence, it cannot be conceded that it produced such a far-reaching, deep-going disturbance of his whole nature, in both body and soul, as this theory requires.

The truth of the matter is both simpler and pleasanter. Adam indeed lost, by his sin, all his supernatural and preternatural gifts, but did not lose anything belonging to his nature as man. All the elements, properties, and endowments that constituted his manhood he kept intact and unspoilt. So also the human nature that he handed on to his children was perfect in its kind, having in it no natural defect or infection or evil inclination that can be looked upon as the direct result of his sin.

It may appear that this does not do full justice to the decrees of Orange and Trent, or even that it is a flat contradiction of them. As regards the decrees of Orange, an examination of their historical circumstances will dissipate the apparent contradiction. The Pelagian heretics, against whom they were directed, denied that there is any difference between Adam's state before his sin and that in which we are born. His state, they said, was purely natural, a state of subjection to death, concupiscence, and suffering. Adam's sin, they also contended, was a purely personal matter, entailing no consequences upon his children except in so far as they are apt to follow his bad example. It is also to be remarked that, in the course of this controversy, both Catholics and Pelagians always considered Adam from the historical, not from. the philosophical, point of view; in other words, they took him as he really was, without distinguishing between his actual condition and the hypothetical condition in which he would have been if God had given him nothing beyond his merely human endowments, if he had been created in the state of pure nature, as theologians call it. This distinction was a refinement of later theological thought, unused at that time.

Now the Catholics, while condemning the Pelagians' tenets, used their language, and basing themselves always on the comparison between the historical Adam before his fall and the same man after

his sin, found no difficulty in saying that, through sin, the whole man in: both body and soul was changed for the worse, suffering injury to his liberty and the vitiation of his will. In thus decreeing they did not mean to affirm that he was any the less a complete and perfect man than he had been at first; they only wished to make it clear that man in a state of sin is, in every way, a much less perfect being, especially when looked upon as a voyager to heaven, than man in the state of original justice and sanctity. The continuation and conclusion of the decree confirm this interpretation, and show that the fathers of the council simply wished to emphasise the incapacity under which Adam lay, after his sin, to perform any "salutary act," that is, any act which would positively help him along the road to heaven.

Moreover, a little thought will show how deeply the deprivation of the gifts in question affected Adam's human nature in its entirety, and thus will justify the language of the conciliar decree. Though they were not natural to him, yet they were seated and rooted deep in his nature, in his soul; they were an adornment and perfection of his whole being, raising him to a higher level, giving him new capacities, and setting up a perfect harmony between all the elements of his nature. Therefore their loss, while not depriving him of any natural perfection; while leaving his manhood intact and unspoilt in itself, yet left it without all those added ornaments and graces which gave it such strength and beauty.

If we turn from the decree of Orange to that of Trent, which, as far as concerns this particular point, but repeats the phrase used in the earlier council, we find confirmation of our interpretation in the explanation of the words given by a theologian who took a leading part in the formulation and discussion of the Tridentine doctrinal decrees, to wit Dominic Soto, whose comment runs thus: "Man is said to be wounded in his natural endowments. For since it belongs to man's nature to act according to reason, which he is prevented from doing by sensuality, the gift of justice, by repressing sensuality, perfected man in his nature, by removing the obstacle preventing him from acting according to reason, as is natural to man. So therefore the privation of this supernatural gift was an injury and a wound inflicted upon his nature, in so far as it left man defenceless and open to the attacks of the devil, the world, and the

flesh, so that he could not always act as nature meant him to do. It is as if, it being a man's nature to walk straight, he had a dog tied to him pulling him this way and that; then anyone controlling the dog would perfect the man in his natural endowments, and anyone removing the control would, in the same way, injure him. And this is how we are to understand the first canon of the fifth session of our synod (viz., the Council of Trent), where, dealing with the effects of original sin, it lays down that, because of it, we have incurred captivity under the power of the devil, and that the whole Adam, and therefore we also, have been changed for the worse both as to body and soul. Whence it follows that a man with original sin alone upon his soul, and free from the habits contracted by actual sins, has no greater propensity towards the objects of sense than he would have in a state of pure nature." (Dom. Soto, *De Natura et Gratia*, Bk. I, ch. 13.)

We conclude, then, that Adam's sin did not deprive him of any of his purely natural endowments; after it as before his manhood was intrinsically whole and perfect.

A further difficulty now meets us. When we repent after sinning and are taken back into God's friendship, we recover everything - grace, virtues, merits - that we had lost by sin. Why cannot the same be said of Adam, if, as Catholic tradition believes, he did penance for his sin and was forgiven? If grace was given back to him, why were integrity and immortality withheld?

As regards immortality the answer is at hand, implied in what has been said above. He was promised immortality conditionally, if he kept God's command. He was only potentially immortal, subject to a condition that affected one act alone, and not any others that might follow. Hence this one condition being unfulfilled, his loss of the promised gift was final; repentance could not recover it for him. But this argument does not apply to the gift of integrity which he actually possessed; some other reason must be sought. This is found in the very nature of sin and in the special circumstances of Adam's sin. Sin (we refer to mortal sin only) is essentially an act of the will which perversely turns away from God, seeking its full satisfaction and final good elsewhere. Any sin is incompatible with the presence of sanctifying grace in the soul, but it does not necessarily affect all

of man's spiritual powers or therefore drive out all his supernatural virtues, some of which may have their immediate seat in the unaffected powers, and may exist apart from grace. So, for example, the virtue of faith is not destroyed by every mortal sin; it is seated immediately in the intellect and is destroyed only by that sin whereby the intellect turns away from God, the sin of unbelief. Similarly our other and lower natural faculties are not directly affected by every sin. Hence repentance, which means the rectification of the will and of the particular faculty affected by the sin, and its consequence, forgiveness, restore to us all that the sin had lost us.

But let us now take the case of a man who, through long indulgence in some sin, such as drunkenness, has contracted a strong, habitual inclination towards it. The act of repentance restores him to grace and rectifies his will, in the purpose of amendment, with regard to that sin, but it does not take away his inclination towards it. Putting right his will does not put right the habit acquired by his lower appetite, and he has a struggle in front of him before the inclination is overcome and he regains balance and control. So in this case, repentance does not restore all that is lost by sin; it does not restore the right inclination of the appetite perverted by the habit of sin, because this inclination, set up by repeated acts, affects a part of his nature which is not wholly within his will's controlling power. Similar principles apply in Adam's case. Integrity is evidently not a necessary accompaniment of grace, but in him it depended upon grace, so that losing the one by sin he lost the other. But there is no intrinsic reason why getting back the one should mean getting back the other. Adam could rectify his will by repentance, which involves by God's benevolence the restoration of grace; but integrity, or its contrary, concupiscence, is not a thing within the power and control of his will, but something affecting the impulses and movements of his sensitive appetites under the stimulus of external objects; hence the rectification of his will in repentance did not involve the restoration of integrity. God could have given it back to him, but we need not investigate the reasons why he did not; it is enough to have shown why its restoration was not involved in Adam's repentance. Before going on to discuss the transmission of original sin, a little more must be said about the effect produced in Adam from a special point of view, which has

some bearing upon questions to be treated later.

In one way or another all the evils suffered by Adam after the fall were the punishment of his sin, even though some of them were not caused by any positive action on God's part, but were simply the result of the withdrawal of his non-natural endowments. Thus the insurgence of concupiscence was the natural result of the loss of integrity. God did not put concupiscence into Adam as a positive punishment; he took off the special brake that he had provided, and natural laws were allowed to have a free course.

But the matter must be looked at from another angle also. Sanctifying grace was not merely a favour given to Adam to keep or to throw away as he pleased. He was under a strict obligation to keep it, because it was the necessary means to the fulfilment of God's design in his regard, the necessary means to the attaining of the end which it was God's will that he should reach. Therefore the rejection of it was in itself sinful; the loss of sanctifying grace was not only the consequence of his sin, not only the penalty of his sin, but also in itself had its share in the guilt of sin. The same is true, in due proportion, of the loss of integrity. In itself this gift is morally indifferent, in the sense that it is not a virtue (just as its opposite concupiscence is not a vice or a sin, as was explicitly defined, as regards those who have been baptised, by the Council of Trent), but in tendency, or what may be called intention, it is decidedly and positively moral, since through the perfect harmony it sets up between man's lower nature and his higher, and the easy and full dominion it gives to the latter over the former, it removes all the perils of temptation arising from the senses and so makes sin much less easy. It was, consequently, a means, subsidiary indeed, but highly important for the attainment of the end set before Adam by God, and he was therefore under strict obligation to preserve it. Further, its loss exposed him to the grave and proximate danger of falling into many more sins, and for this reason also its rejection, just as that of grace, was in itself sinful.

This line of reasoning, however, will not hold if applied to the loss of immortality, which did not share in the nature of a sin, but was exclusively a punishment. In the first place, as we have seen, Adam did not actually possess this gift; it had only been promised him

conditionally. Secondly, it is morally a thing wholly indifferent, both in itself and in its implications and bearings. To be immortal is certainly a great privilege, but to be subject to death cannot be a fault. Death is not, even indirectly, a moral evil to be avoided, as is the absence of grace, and likewise, in its way and measure, the absence or loss of integrity. Subjection to death, then, unlike the loss of grace and integrity, was exclusively the penalty of sin, but not, in itself, partaking of the nature of sin. And, we may note in passing, this consideration will help us to understand why our blessed Lady, though conceived immaculate and free from concupiscence, though placed, as far as these two endowments are concerned, in the same exalted position as Adam had been before his fall, was yet not made immortal. The presence in her soul of original sin would have been a moral blemish, so also would have been the existence of concupiscence in her nature, by reason of its close connection with sin, whereas subjection to death is wholly outside the sphere of morality.

Original Sin in Adam's Children

So far we have confined our attention to the results of Adam's sin as they were personal to himself. We have now to consider its consequences as they affect all his descendants, always excepting, of course, Jesus Christ himself and his immaculate mother, Mary.

The Church's teaching, which we have to expound, is contained in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and sth Canons of the Fifth Session of the Council of Trent. For our purpose in this chapter the 2nd Canon is the most important. Herein it is decreed that they incur anathema who assert "that Adam's sin wrought injury to himself alone and not to his posterity; that he brought upon himself only and not upon us also the loss of sanctity and justice which he had received from God; or that he . . . transmitted to the whole human race death and bodily sufferings alone, and not sin which is the death of the soul."

First of all, a few words of preparatory definition and explanation. Theologians define sin as a turning away from God, our last end, and seeking our end in some created good. We are speaking of mortal sin, which alone is sin in the full sense of the word. This is an abstract or formal definition. In concrete terms sin is any act (and act includes words, thoughts, and omissions) whereby man, by violating the divine command and rebelling against God's will, turns his back on God. This is actual sin. The act, however, which may be the work of but a moment, passes, but it has brought about a state of the soul which persists. It has expelled grace from the sinner's soul. Graceless, he is in a state of aversion from and hostility to God. His soul, deprived of its supernatural life, is spiritually dead. He is in a condition of moral disorder; he has left the path to heaven and set his feet on the road to hell. This state is called the state of habitual sin. A warning against possible confusion is here necessary. In ordinary colloquial English habitual sin generally means something quite different; it denotes some sinful act committed so often that it has become an acquired habit; so we speak of an habitual liar or drunkard. We are using the term now in its closer theological sense, as meaning the permanence or fixity of a condition of sinfulness, which results from the commital of any one sin. This condition of habitual sin persists, until the

sinner, helped and urged by actual grace, repents, puts himself right with God, whether in the sacrament of penance or otherwise, is received again into God's friendship, and made holy by the renewed inpouring of sanctifying grace into his soul.

As we have seen, Adam was put into the supernatural order and enriched with many gifts, with sanctifying grace, integrity, and potential or conditional immortality. By his sin he lost all these and, though he repented and recovered grace, it is Catholic teaching that, as the result of his sin, all men, except Jesus Christ and his blessed mother, are born without these gifts, which, but for Adam's sin, they would have possessed, born, therefore, subject to death and concupiscence, and deprived of grace. (*A partial exception must be made in the case of Saint John the Baptist, "conceived" being substituted for "born."*)

This condition in which we are born is contrary to God's primary intention with regard to man, it is a state of privation, and, considered in its totality, is called the state of fallen nature or of original sin. It is clear that all the elements of this state are not of equal importance, or equally pertinent to the essential constitution of original sin, and later on we shall have to discuss their relative values.

Our immediate task is to set forth the fact that we are born in this state, and that it is, in fact, the consequence of Adam's sin. Since the aim of these volumes is mainly expository and explanatory, it is not for us to set out and examine in full the scriptural proof of the dogma of original sin, or to follow its unfolding from the first indistinct indications of it in some of the Old Testament writings, to its clear and definite formulation by Saint Paul. We cannot, however, pass over in silence Saint Paul's witness to this dogma, and his emphatic and clear exposition of its fundamental importance, although this must be well known to all Catholics.

The relevant passage is from the 12th to the 21st verse of the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Let us look for a moment at the setting of this passage. In the first four chapters the Apostle treats at length of man's justification, showing that it cannot be brought about by doing the works prescribed in the law of Moses, but that Christ's grace is necessary. In the sixth chapter he begins to

speak about the life of man after his justification and his progressive sanctification if he lives according to the spirit of Christ. The fifth chapter forms a kind of bridge connecting these two parts and is itself divided into two distinct portions. In the first half he shows how justification, acquired by the grace of Jesus Christ, is of itself a sure pledge of salvation and is the way that leads to future glory. Then from the twelfth verse onwards he gives a sort of historical explanation of all that he has already said about justification, and so makes it of universal application. Few passages in Saint Paul's writings are more vivid and dramatic than this, with its continual swing and movement from one extreme to the other, its repeated contrasting of opposing hostile forces, sin and grace, life and death, Adam the sinner, Christ the saviour, and its joyful celebration of the final triumph of grace:

"12 Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned. 13 For until the law sin was in the world; but sin was not imputed when the law was not. 14 But death reigned from Adam unto Moses, even over them also who have not sinned after the similitude of the transgression of Adam, who is a figure of him who was to come."

So runs the Douai version of the first three and the most pertinent verses of the passage. This, however, does not give the full force of Saint Paul's words as they stand in the original Greek. In verse 12, for example, the words "in whom" should, according to the most probable interpretation, be replaced by "because" or "in that" to get his real meaning. Thus he says that death came upon all men because all sinned. And how they sinned is clear from the argument that he at once goes on to state, which, though faulty, perhaps, in construction, is cogent in its demonstrative force. There was sin in the world from the beginning, but it was not imputed - that is, it was not imputed unto death; until the law of Moses was enacted there was no positive law among the Hebrews, none at least with divine sanction, making any particular sin punishable with death; and yet during this time death reigned and exercised dominion over all, even over those just men who did not imitate Adam by committing personal, actual sins.

So, to put it briefly, the argument runs thus: Death is the penalty of sin; death afflicts all men, therefore all have sinned; but not all men have committed personal sins; therefore the sin under which all labour, and for which all suffer death, is the sin that all committed when Adam sinned. As his death made all men mortal, so likewise his sin made all men sinful.

So far as this particular point is concerned the rest of the passage adds nothing to the argument. Saint Paul does not explain how Adam's sin has come down to us, or how we can be said to have sinned, in any true sense, through or in his sin, or what exactly this sin of ours consists in, or several other points that depend upon or result from this teaching. The elucidation of these questions was to be the work of the Church and her doctors and theologians in later ages; before, however, we turn our attention to these matters, we may briefly consider the fact of the existence of original sin in all mankind from another point of view.

We have, so far, been looking at this doctrine from the point of view of revelation alone. We wish now to ask what, if anything, human reason has to say about it. It is, of course, evident that reason cannot prove directly that the soul of a newly-born infant is deprived of sanctifying grace, and is in a state displeasing to God, a state of sin. This can be known by faith alone, in much the same way as, for example, the real presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist. But in a more general way has reason anything to say in the matter? Can the human reason, unaided by the light of divine revelation, deduce from man's history and present condition that the race is in a fallen state, that there has been some primeval moral catastrophe, which has so affected all mankind that the whole race is oppressed by its weight and subject to its consequent penalty?

Many have answered affirmatively. Looking round upon all the evils that afflict mankind and fill the world, they have concluded that there is no adequate explanation of this terrible state of things except that afforded by the dogma of original sin. The best-known exposition of this view in English is, probably, the one given by Cardinal Newman. "To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of man; their starts, their

fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship; their enterprises, their aimless courses, their random achievements and acquirements, the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the tokens so faint and broken of a superintending design, the blind evolution of what turn out to be great powers or truths, the progress of things, as if from unreasoning elements, not towards final causes, the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity, the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race, so fearfully yet exactly described in the Apostle's words, 'having no hope and without God in the world' - all this is a vision to dizzy and appal, and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution.

"What shall we say to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact? I can only answer, that either there is no Creator, or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from his presence. Did I see a boy of good make and mind, with the tokens on him of a refined nature, cast upon the world without provision, unable to say whence he came, his birthplace or his family connections, I should conclude that there was some mystery connected with his history, and that he was one of whom, from one cause or another, his parents were ashamed. Thus only should I be able to account for the contrast between the promise and the condition of his being. And so I argue about the world: *if* there be a God, *since* there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. It is out of joint with the purposes of its Creator. This is a fact, a fact as true as the fact of its existence; and thus the doctrine of what is theologically called original sin becomes to me almost as certain as that the world exists, and as the existence of God." (Newman, *Apologia pro Vita sua*)

In much the same way Pascal argues. (Pascal, *Pensées*) Both he and Cardinal Newman set out the argument in quite a general way. Others, wishing to strengthen it, come down to particulars and details; some by appealing to physical and moral evils indifferently, try to prove that the discord, confusion, pains and wickedness of

the world cannot be reconciled with the notion of a good, wise, and omnipotent God, except upon the hypothesis of some great primeval catastrophe which upset everything; others, for the material of their argument, bring up moral evil alone, in so far as it results from concupiscence, and insist upon its universal and almost complete dominion over mankind, with the resultant enormity and universality of human malice. If for no other reason than the genius and just renown of those who have sponsored them, these arguments cannot be lightly dismissed. But they all seem to lie open to one fatal objection which robs them of real demonstrative power. When we recall that immunity from death, suffering, and concupiscence was a gratuitous privilege added to human nature and not a constitutive part of it, it becomes impossible to say with certainty that human evils and miseries cannot be wholly explained by purely natural causes, that they are not the result of the ordinary action and interplay of simple human and natural passions and tendencies, without postulating some far-off fall from a higher state, some aboriginal break with the Creator's purposes.

The argument, then, is not absolutely conclusive; it is, however, by no means valueless. It is a strong confirmation of the truth of the revealed dogma, and shows that this is the most satisfying solution of the riddle of human affairs. On this point, as on others, Saint Thomas speaks with that caution and prudence characteristic of him, his conclusion being that, if we take into account divine providence and the dignity of the higher part of human nature, it can with great probability be shown that the evils afflicting mankind are of a penal nature, whence it can be gathered that the human race is from its origin infected with some sin. (*Contra Gentiles (God and His Creatures), Bk. IV, ch, 52.*)

Now that we have established the bare fact of the existence of original sin, derived from Adam, in all his children; many questions at once confront us. What is the precise nature of this sin and how can it be called sin, in any true sense of the word, seeing that it does not depend upon the individual's free will? How can it be handed down from father to son? How can its existence and results be reconciled with God's goodness?

The pivotal question is the first, to which our next chapter must be

given.

The Nature of Original Sin

This is a matter on which Catholic theologians have differed among themselves, a matter as to which there has been a progressive elucidation of the content of divine revelation, and wherein the defined teaching of the Church still leaves some little room for speculation.

Saint Augustine was the first great theologian who was called upon to deal specifically and in any detail with the nature of original sin. (*Perhaps a partial reservation should be made in favour of Saint Irenaeus, but as his teaching on the question had no influence upon later doctors, he may here be neglected.*) His treatment, however, was far from being systematic, and his thought is so elusive that, even today, though his doctrine has been closely studied by many, there is no general agreement as to what he really held. According to some authorities he thought that original sin consisted in unruly concupiscence, especially sexual concupiscence, and it must be admitted that there is much in his writings to support this opinion. Others, however, acquit him of so crude and almost materialistic a conception, and maintain that he taught that original sin lay rather in the guilt or imputability of concupiscence, in so far as, all men being morally contained in Adam, all human nature being morally summed up in his, it follows that the whole race of men is not only subject to concupiscence, but also shares in the guilt attaching to the existence of concupiscence. As we have seen, the existence of concupiscence in Adam is to be imputed to him as a sin, since his rejection of integrity was sinful; Saint Augustine, then, would have it that this guilt is shared by all men, and constitutes the original sin. This is probably the truer interpretation of Saint Augustine's thought.

In the succeeding centuries most theologians followed more or less faithfully in Saint Augustine's footsteps; but, though something was done towards clearing away the uncertainties, it was left to Saint Thomas to find in this, as in so many other difficult matters, the true way of reconciliation between revelation and the demands of sound reason. With the coming of Protestantism in all its many forms, the whole dogma of original sin became once more the

subject matter of attack, denial, and controversy. Some of the Protestant theologians attenuated its importance and its effects, others exaggerated them beyond all measure, even going so far as to say that human nature was wholly corrupted and free will destroyed. The spread of these errors made it necessary for the Church to define her teaching somewhat more accurately than had hitherto been done. In the decrees of the Council of Trent, therefore, the following points are made clear: Man's primitive holiness and justice have been lost, and to all of Adam's descendants have been transmitted both bodily death and sin, which is the death of the soul; (Can. 2) original sin is not caused by our imitating Adam's sin, but is produced by natural propagation - that is, it is not actual sin, yet it is proper or personal to each soul; (Can. 3) it is heretical to say that through baptism it is merely covered up or not imputed, for it is utterly taken away. Concupiscence, however, remains, which, though sometimes called sin, is not sin really and strictly speaking, the name being given to it because it arises from and tends to sin. (Can. 5)

A few years later the condemnation of certain propositions extracted from the writings of Michael Bay of Louvain made it clear that original sin is to be taken as voluntary with respect to the free will of Adam in whom it began.

These definitions are not complete, nor are they meant to be; they were not intended to cover the whole ground, but were framed simply in view of the particular errors then current, as is usually the Church's way in defining her teaching. But they give us a solid foundation, upon which, by the application of approved principles, and by a faithful following of Saint Thomas in particular, it is easy to build a positive explanation without fear of going astray.

The enquiry into the exact nature of original sin demands close attention; the matter is by no means as simple as it may seem; it is, on the contrary, somewhat subtle, and it behooves us to speak with a nice appreciation of phraseology and care in the use of words. But any trouble will be well repaid by the better and deeper understanding of the truth, by the enhanced appreciation of the reasonableness of the Catholic doctrine; and the clearer view of the harmonious agreement between its various parts.

Saint Thomas, then, whom we take as our guide, begins his exposition of the subject (*Quaest. Disp. De Malo, qu. 4, a 2.*) by laying down the evident principle, that nothing can be included under the concept of original sin except what is derived from the sin committed by Adam as head of the human race. But in his sin, as in every other, there are two elements to be taken into account: the first is the turning away from God, our last end, and the direct result of this is the loss of sanctifying grace; the second element is the undue and inordinate cleaving to some created, lesser good in place of God, and to this element corresponds the introduction of concupiscence. Hence we find both of these elements existing in all Adam's posterity. By a process of reasoning which we need not follow in detail, he goes on to show that the deprivation of grace is the more important element, the distinctive, determining, or, in scholastic language, the formal element, while concupiscence is secondary, complementary, and participates in the nature of sin only under the influence of the former element; in scholastic speech, it is the material or quasi-material element. It will make this clear if we suppose, for a moment, that Adam had been created in a state of grace, but yet, at the same time, subject to concupiscence. Then his sin would have deprived him of grace, but would not have introduced concupiscence, as this was already present. In that case concupiscence would not have been a constituent element in his sinfulness, because it would not have been influenced, determined, brought into existence by the sinful act entailing the loss of grace.

Finally, since there can be no sinfulness where the element of willing is altogether absent, Saint Thomas proceeds to show how the loss of grace in us, and the presence of concupiscence, can be said to be voluntary. Here he invokes that principle, so dear to Saint Paul, that governs the whole economy or dispensation of the spiritual relationships of men in the fall, the redemption, the Church, the communion of saints, and, indeed, is nowadays coming to be more and more clearly recognised as the connecting thread of all human affairs, the principle of the physical and moral and spiritual solidarity or oneness of all mankind.

Upon this principle, Adam sinned not merely as an individual, but as the moral head and spiritual representative of the whole race; when he rebelled it was all mankind that, through the rebellious

will of its head, refused obedience to God, and thus it is this relationship of our dependence upon Adam, and this alone that brings us, born without grace and with concupiscence, under the category and denomination of sinners, in a real and proper, though evidently a very special; sense. And so we come to the definition of original sin, which, according to Saint Thomas, is the culpable privation of original justice (the word "justice" including both grace and integrity), the culpability, so far as it affects us, being due to the fact that it results from the act of our moral and spiritual head and representative.

Some later theologians, striving after an even greater accuracy of expression, leave out the element of concupiscence (the loss of integrity) and so define original sin as the privation of sanctifying grace, whereby we are averted from God, our supernatural end, and which is, in a way, voluntary in us by reason of our dependence upon Adam. It would be wholly out of place to look more closely into the comparative merits of these two definitions. The trained theologian will appreciate the difference between them and will see wherein one may, perchance, serve better than the other for the solving of subtle objections against the Catholic dogma; but without a doubt both are satisfactory as enshrining and guarding the substance of the dogma.

In this connection it is interesting to note what was done at the Vatican Council in 1870. Had the Council been able to finish its labours, cut short by the Italian invasion of Rome, it had been intended to include among the definitions of doctrine some on the subject of original sin, in view of a fresh crop of errors that had sprung up. The canons or decrees had been drawn up, examined, revised and amended by the committee of theologians appointed for the purpose, and were ready to be submitted to the fathers of the Council in full session. They have, of course, no conciliar authority, but they have the authority attaching to the representative body of theologians who framed them, and, judging from what happened in the case of other decrees that were actually approved and issued by the Council - for example, those on the Pope's infallibility - we may conclude that these on original sin do represent, in substance, what would have become defined dogma had circumstances allowed. The relevant canons are as follows: Canon 4: If anyone shall say that

original sin is not truly and properly a sin in Adam's descendants, unless they, by sinning, actually consent to it, let him be anathema; Canon 5: If anyone shall say that original sin is formally (Note: *Formally*, a word of common occurrence in scholastic theology, which may be rendered here as "precisely identical with.") concupiscence itself, or some physical or substantial disease of human nature, and shall deny that the privation of sanctifying grace is an essential constituent of it, let him be anathema. (*Collectio Lacensis, vol. vii, col. 566.*)

In the explanatory notes accompanying these canons it is set forth that the fifth is directed against those who, holding various and discordant opinions, agree in denying that the privation of sanctifying grace enters into its essence; and it is then noted that the canon does not define that the essence of original sin is nothing but the privation of grace, but that this privation does enter into its essence. (*Collectio Lacensis, vol. vii, col. 558.*) This is stressed in another annotation which recognises that among Catholic theologians there are different ways of defining the essence of original sin which quite safeguard the dogma, and again asserts that the only intention of the canon is to define that the privation of grace does belong to that essence. (*Collectio Lacensis, vol. vii, col. 549.*)

The primary essential element of original sin is, therefore, the deprivation of sanctifying grace, while according to Saint Thomas, a complementary element is the deprivation of integrity, or, speaking in positive terms, the existence of concupiscence.

It now remains to be seen how this state of deprivation in which we are born, this loss of original justice, can be said to be sinful, displeasing to God, and morally evil, or in other words, how it can, as it exists in us, be brought under the denomination of voluntary; for otherwise it cannot in any true sense be called sinful, since sin is essentially a matter of free will. Some little has already been said when expounding Saint Thomas's doctrine on the essence of original sin, but we must now enquire more closely into it.

To solve this question we must go back to the beginning when God bestowed original justice upon Adam, so that by considering the conditions upon which it was given, we may the better understand

the results flowing from its loss. Or it would be truer to say that from the known results we can come to a knowledge of the original conditions of the gift, since these are, at the most, implied and not explicitly stated in Holy Scripture.

Original justice, then, was given to Adam not for himself alone, but given to him for all men; it Was not just a privilege personal to him, but was a gift to all mankind, who potentially were in him and were, in the future, to derive their human nature from him. So it was to have been passed on to all through the channel of natural generation, in the sense that, according to the divine plan, it would have been given to all men as the inevitable but supernatural consequence of their coming into human existence by way of natural procreation. The state of grace, with all that it implies, was to have been mankind's inheritance, on condition that it had been preserved by Adam, who was thus put into the position of the official and, as it were, the judicial head and representative of the whole human family. This is clearly implied by the Council of Trent (Session VI, Can. 2.) when it rejects and condemns the opinion that Adam's loss of the holiness and justice that he had received from God was his loss alone, and not ours also, for he could not have lost it for us unless he had also received it for us, as a sacred trust and inheritance to be handed on to us.

Now is must be noted that this divine dispensation or arrangement depends upon God's positive ordinance; it does not result from the very nature of things. There is nothing in the nature of grace to make the universality of its distribution dependent upon the oneness of the human race; had God so chosen, he could have raised every individual to the state of grace from the moment of conception, without taking any account of what Adam had done, of whether he had sinned or not. As Creator of both nature and grace he has supreme and unfettered liberty in all his dealings with men on either plane. Hence by giving Adam this power of handing on grace to all men or of cutting it off from them he gave him a special privilege and responsibility; he constituted him the head and representative of all mankind in a new way, in the spiritual order, the order of grace; he set up another and new kind of unity and solidarity between Adam and all his chidren. Adam became the human spring whence grace was to flow and pass through the

whole human stream. Yet, at the same time, this new, high office of his, though strictly supernatural and dependent upon God's special ordinance and positive dispensation, was based and raised upon Adam's natural office as the fount and spring of human nature; it was closely connected with it, and may even be\looked upon as the same office raised to the supernatural order. As all men were seminally in Adam from the point of view of their human elements and nature, so it was God's dispensation that they should all be in him, as a river in its source, with regard to their supernatural endowments. Hence Adam's probation or trial and his reaction to it were matters of the greatest moment to all his children. If he had proved staunch and faithful he would have been confirmed in his high office as the human source of supernatural life for all mankind. There would have been no need for the "second Adam," Jesus Christ, to have been installed in that office. But as he failed under trial, the office was taken from him, and he became, instead of the supernatural spring of life, the natural source of death, of both body and soul, for all men.

We see then, that; by reason of Adam's representative character, and on account of the supernatural unity and solidarity established by God, between him and all his posterity, when he was put on trial, it was the whole human race that was being tested, and all mankind that was found wanting. It was not simply the will of an individual, isolated man that rebelled against God, but a will that represented and acted in behalf of the whole human family.

Thus original sin, as it is in each one of us, is voluntary, not indeed by any act of our personal will, but through the act of the "family will," (as Saint Thomas calls it, the *voluntas naturae*, the will, not of the person, but of humankind taken collectively) through our relationship of spiritual dependence upon and solidarity with our first, divinely appointed, supernatural head and representative Adam. This explanation may seem, at first sight, to be far-fetched, or to be merely an arbitrary theory concocted in order to escape the difficulties caused by a harsh and unreasonable dogma. It is, in fact, strictly scriptural. It is implied in all that Saint Paul says about the fall and the redemption. His epistles are full of this idea of moral unity and solidarity, on the one hand, between Adam and his posterity, on the other, between Jesus Christ and his members or

brethren. We have already seen how his incisive words, "For all sinned" (Romans 5:12) can refer only to the sin that all committed in Adam; again he writes: "For by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive," (1 Corinthians 15:21-22) where he invokes the same principle to explain the whole dispensation of the fall and redemption.

The same explanation was given by the theologians who framed and annotated the decrees and definitions which were to have been submitted to the consideration of the Vatican Council. "In this form of the definition," they write, "three things are to be noticed: (*a*) what is said to belong to the essence of original sin is not a mere negation, the absence of sanctifying grace, but is the privation of grace, that is, the absence of that sanctity which, according to God's ordinance, ought to have been found in all Adam's descendants, inasmuch as God raised the whole human race to the supernatural order of grace, in its source and head, whereas now all are deprived of grace. But this privation (*b*) neither does nor can exist without a fault committed by free will; this free will, however, is not that which is personal to each individual, but the free will of the head of the whole human race, of Adam himself, who, sinning, lost not only that grace which belonged to him personally, but also that which, according to God's plan, would have been passed on to all his children. Hence Adam's sin was the sin of human nature and becomes the habitual sin inhering in all who, by carnal generation, share in the nature derived from Adam. . . ." (Acta Conc. Vaticani, *Collectio Lacensis*, vol. vii, p. 549.)

It was necessary to treat of this rather subtle matter at some length because it forms the centre and core of the whole dogma of original sin from the explanatory point of view. The points to be remembered are these: original sin, as it is in each individual, is not an actual sin, but an habitual sin or a state of sin; the free will concerned in it is not the free-will of the individual, but the free will of the head of the family or race, in so far as Adam was appointed the family or race representative in the supernatural order; and therefore the individual is not responsible personally, for through no fault of his own is he a member of the family despoiled by its father's sin of its supernatural privileges. These points being

established, everything else follows almost as a matter of course.

The Transmission of Original Sin

The question of the transmission of original sin from generation to generation presents no great difficulty once its nature has been settled, but it is interesting from the point of view of historical theology. It is a good example of the way in which, with the progress of time and the incidence of conflict and discussion, the meaning of some revealed dictrine grows clearer, though in substance and reality it has been firmly believed from the beginning. From the very first the Church taught that all the children of Adam are born in a state of enmity with God and need to be reborn and cleansed in the Sacrament of Baptism. The whole dogma of original sin is bound up in this belief, but, as is clear, it is implicit only. It was but gradually that the implications were worked out, and that many points of truth, hitherto hidden or unheeded, began to be seen clearly. During the first four centuries the process of development had already gone some way, but the Pelagian controversy in the fifth did more to carry it forward than anything that had hitherto happened. But even this did not bring full enlightenment, one point upon which there was still some obscurity being that of how original sin is passed on from generation to generation. The ante-Pelagian fathers had stressed, even to exaggeration, the act of generation as the medium of transmission; some of them, indeed, seem to regard it as the true effective cause of original sin. The Pelagians put the question in a new light. The soul, they said, is spiritual and, therefore, cannot be produced by the physical act of generation; neither can a father transfuse or pass on some of his soul to his son, for being spiritual, it is indivisible. The soul, then, must be directly created by God. So far the argument is sound, but, because they had a wrong notion of original sin, they drew a false conclusion, for they said to the Catholics: "If the soul is created in a state of sin, as you contend, God must be the author of the sin, a blasphemous doctrine that no Christian can hold. Therefore, you must give up your false dogma of original sin."

Saint Augustine felt the force of the objection, which has its full effect today upon those who hold erroneous opinions upon the nature of original sin. He could not see a good way out of the

difficulty, and consequently against his instinctive inclination and his better judgment, could not bring himself to accept without reserve the teaching that each soul is immediately and directly created by God. He hoped that some justification could be found for the theory of traducianism, according to which the father exerts a real causative and productive efficiency in the production of his son's soul. His letter to Saint Jerome on the subject (*Epist. Saint Augustini, 166.*) proves both his painful hesitation on the point and his profound intellectual humility; whatever his preferences might be, and however great the difficulties entailed by the truth, he would accept it wholeheartedly. The real cause of his difficulty lay, of course in his imperfect understanding of the nature of original sin. This problem had not yet been worked out to its final solution. Though Saint Augustine, probably, did not hold that original sin is identical with concupiscence, as he has often been accused of doing, though he did not conceive of it as some positive poison infecting the soul, yet he was overmuch inclined to look upon its positive aspect, and over-estimated the part played in it by concupiscence. But if we bear in mind the definition that has been given and its explanation, the difficulty that bothered him disappears and the transmission of original sin through the act of generation is easily understood.

It is a result of mankind's solidarity, physical and spiritual, with Adam. We are burdened with original sin only in so far as we are one family with Adam as our head and representative. His headship in the supernatural order is founded on and co-extensive with his physical headship, and therefore affects all those and only those who are descended from him by physical generation. Or, again, original sin is not a matter of the individual's will, but of the "family" will, the representative's will; it partakes of the nature of sin only in so far as it is derived from Adam. But everything derived from him comes to us by the way of physical generation whereby human nature is handed on from father to son. Hence original sin, just as every other human inheritance, comes to us by this channel. This is not to say that the act of generation is the efficient cause of the existence of original sin in the individual. That act is not the efficient or productive cause even of the existence of the child's soul. (*Vide vol. vi, p. 79*) All it does' is so to dispose the material body, to put it into such a condition that, according to the divinely

established laws of nature, it calls for and, if we may be allowed the word, necessitates the creation of the soul by God. But this soul, good and, indeed, a perfect thing in the natural order, is deprived of that sanctifying grace which it ought to have had,! according to God's original but conditional design; instead of being supernaturalised, as it ought to have been, it is a purely natural thing; at the same time, and owing to the same cause, the whole human being, body and soul, is deprived of the gift of integrity, which it ought to have possessed, and, therefore, subject to concupiscence. But all this comes into effect when, and only when, the complete human being comes into existence, which is the result of the act of generation. This act, then, is the vehicle of the transmission of original sin.

After all that has been said, it is hardly necessary to enter upon the process of argument by which God is defended against the charge of injustice commonly made against him in this connection. If original sin were a positive thing made or created by him, the charge could not be met; but such an hypothesis is blasphemous. Again, if original sin lay in the deprivation of something belonging, of right, to man's nature, even though this natural right be God's gift, the accusation could be sustained. But since it consists in the deprivation of something to which man has not the shadow of a claim or right, of something that is farther above his own capacity of attainment, farther beyond the stretch of his own faculties to reach, than even reason would be above the powers of the lower animals, the deprivation, to wit, of sanctifying grace, the bottom drops out of the charge altogether. God chose to give this supernatural gift to man out of the abundance of his love. His decision was unfettered, divinely free. Similarly, therefore, he was completely free to make the conditions upon which the gift should be given, kept, and handed on. In the supernatural order, it cannot be too often repeated, man has and can have no rights against God, no claims upon him; God can have no duties towards man. On his side it is all a matter of free bestowal; on ours of undeserved receiving. Even our merits, real as they are, are not ours in principle, but come from God's grace through Jesus Christ. Therefore there can be no question of injustice arising out of the existence and transmission of original sin, because this is a matter concerning the supernatural order of grace, wherein God's freedom

is above all measure and understanding. Many Catholic writers, in dealing with this question, use as an illustration the example of a king who, out of pure benevolence, raises one of his lowest subjects, an unlettered, unknown peasant, to the highest and most honourable position in the kingdom, with the promise that, should he prove himself faithful and deserving, his honours and estates will be confirmed to his heirs for ever, while, on the other hand, the consequence of unfaithfulness will be the reduction of himself and them to the lowly condition wherefrom he had been raised. Put to the test, the ungrateful subject fails and rebels against his king. As a result he is stripped of all his possessions, and not only does he sink back to his former state of poverty and misery, but he and all his children, as long as men keep the remembrance of his history, lie under the stigma and disgrace of ingratitude, rebellion, and treason. As far as it goes the illustration is good; it shows that no accusation of injustice against God can be upheld, but it is only an illustration, and, like all analogies between the human and the divine, falls far short of being an adequate picture of the reality, since there can be no true measure of proportion between the highest worldly position and the divine, adoptive sonship conferred by grace. We have now to see what effects are produced in us by original sin, first as regards this present life, then as far as the future life is concerned.

The Effects of Original Sin

The first effect of original sin, as regards this present life, is, of course, the loss of sanctifying grace with all therein involved, to wit, the loss of the theological and moral virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Although this loss, as we have seen, is of the very essence of original sin, it may also, from another point of view, be regarded as an effect.

The canon of the Council of Trent (Session V, Can. 2) which defines the Catholic teaching on this point, indicates that the deprivation of grace has two aspects: it has the nature of sin in so far as it is an aversion from God, and the nature of a penalty in so far as we are thereby left bereft of the power and means of attaining the final end to which we were destined.

The second effect is the loss of the preternatural gifts, namely, integrity, immortality, and freedom from pain and suffering. The Council of Trent clearly defined that subjection to death is the result of original sin, but does not speak in such explicit terms about the loss of integrity. Since, however, as seen above, it says that concupiscence "comes from sin," it implies, clearly enough, that Adam's sin is responsible for the loss of integrity, and this is the unanimous teaching of all theologians.

As for the other gifts bestowed upon Adam, their loss is included under the general phrase that "the whole man, both in body and soul, suffered a change for the worse." This loss of the preternatural gifts is often spoken of as a wound in man's nature. A wound is a cut in the body, a severance of parts or tissues which ought to be united, thus creating disunion and disorder and preventing the proper functioning of the parts affected. Similarly by original sin the perfect harmony and unity, that originally reigned throughout the various levels of man's nature, are broken; with the result that his different faculties, especially his higher powers of will and intellect, cannot work with that ease and sureness and peace that otherwise would have been theirs.

These effects had to be mentioned here, even at the cost of some

repetition; but after what has already been set down about them there is no need to say more. There is, however, another effect that must be more fully explained. The Council of Trent speaks in two places of "captivity under the power of the devil" as being the result of Adam's sin. (Session V, Can. 1, and Session VI, cap. 1.) Modern thought, so called, cannot abide the idea of a personal devil, and to its votaries the Tridentine doctrine will appear absurd; many Catholics, even, are a little shy of such teaching, and few, perhaps, realise all that it means. Yet the New Testament is full of it: ‘Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey, whether it be of sin, unto death, or of obedience, unto justice," (Romans 6:16) and, "By whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave;" (2 Peter 2:19) it is, indeed, but one special aspect of a universal natural truth and law.

God, in creating the world, established it as a vast hierarchy of beings, according to a plan of an ascending scale of natural dignity and perfection. From inanimate beings we rise through the different degrees of living things to man, who is supreme among material creatures. Above man is the world of pure spirits, the angels, who, according to Catholic teaching, are divided into choirs according to the varying degrees of their natural dignity. Above all, infinitely transcending all, is God. Now it is the general law of nature that power and dominion correspond with natural perfection and dignity. Every being has some sort of natural dominion over those lower in the scale of perfection, and may make use of them to serve its own lawful ends and convenience. So we may use the lower creatures, animate and inanimate, for our own good, as our servants. We have natural rights over them. These rights are not unlimited, and may be abused. It is, perhaps, impossible to determine the exact limits of this dominion, but as to its real existence there can be no doubt. Similarly in the angelic world, according to Catholic theology, the higher angels exercise a certain empire over the lower, in many ways, as Saint Thomas sets forth at length in his treatise on the angels.

Finally, the angels, by virtue of their higher place in the scale of natural perfection, have certain natural rights of dominion over their inferiors - men, brutes, and lifeless creatures. How far this \empire extends we cannot say; of course, it does not destroy man's

autonomy, but there is no doubt of its existence as a natural corollary of the hierarchy of things. The story told in the Book of Job is an illustration of it.

Consider, now, the angels who rebelled and fell. They were shut out from the supernatural kingdom, but there is no reason whatever to suppose that they suffered any loss or hurt in their natural qualities and endowments. They kept all their wonderful natural gifts of intellect and power, their natural dignity and superiority, and therefore, likewise, their natural rights of dominion, over the lower creatures. And if we accept the common teaching that Lucifer was one of the very highest of God's angels, it follows that his natural empire is of immense power and extent. But another factor in the ordering of things has here to be taken into account. The angels had not been left in their natural state, but had been raised to the supernatural plane, becoming sharers in God's life and glory. Hence when Lucifer was cast down he lost all his natural rights of dominion over those of the lower angels who remained faithful, since the least of those who are in the supernatural order is superior in dignity and perfection to the highest of them who are possessed of natural gifts alone. Satan was despoiled of his kingdom. He suffered a further and greater rebuff to his dignity when man was created and raised by grace to the supernatural plane. Here was a creature who, by all the laws of nature, should have been a lowly subject in Satan's kingdom, yet who, through God's magnificent generosity, had been raised above him and set upon a height of dignity and perfection which he could envy but never reach. Lucifer the proud, "the prince of this world," (John 12:31) found himself humbled, deprived of his natural rights, forced to take a lower place even than man, so far beneath him in the hierarchy of nature. No wonder that he tried to recover his lost empire. Against the faithful angels all assaults must, of necessity, be vain, but man was still open to attack, and when attacked, succumbed. But we must not confuse the issue. This first struggle was purely a battle between the natural and the supernatural. It was not a conflict of good and evil in the merely moral or ethical order. Satan wished to rob man of his supernatural dignity and to pull him down to his purely natural level, so as to enroll him in the ranks of his own subjects. The attack was successful; Adam, for himself and his children, rejected the supernatural, proposing to be his own end and his own ruler,

chose the merely natural, fell to the lower level, and so doing, came once more beneath the empire of Satan, who recovered his natural rights over him as an inferior being, which man's elevation to the supernatural level had taken away from him. Herein lies the basis of man's captivity under the devil's power. It is but the working of a general natural law.

But God's goodness was not defeated. The Redeemer was appointed and, by his merits, drawn upon in advance, mankind was again raised to the supernatural order, and Satan once more despoiled of his natural rights of empire. While, however, man's fall was actually universal, affecting every individual, the redemption, though universal in principle, does not become individually effective until the individual is incorporated with Christ, until Christ's merits are applied to him personally, and sanctifying grace is thus infused into his soul. Being born, then, without grace and subject to the universal effect of Adam's fall, he is born a citizen of the natural kingdom only, where Satan still has and wields his rights and powers of empire. He is born a subject of the devil. In essence, therefore, this subjection to Satan is a quite natural thing, resulting from the natural superiority of angelic to human nature. There is still, however, a reservation to be made. It is true that Christ's redemptive merits are not actually applied to the new-born child until, in baptism, he is incorporated with Christ. But Christ died for all the members of the human family into which the child is born; Christ wishes all to be saved; the child, therefore, is included in the all-embracing supernatural destiny of mankind; if not actually, he is already potentially supernaturalised, and it would seem to follow from this that God does, in fact, curtail to some extent Satan's natural rights of empire. Besides, since the infant is not yet capable of using his reason and will, since they are beyond the influence of his nascent imaginative faculty, in the stimulation of which Satan's power over men principally lies, his dominion over the child is almost wholly, if not quite, passive and ineffectual; he cannot produce in him any actual evil effects or sinful acts. We need not here enquire into the consequences of this captivity, either in infants or adults, which will be set forth in the volume on the angels. It is enough to have established its reality and to have shown that it means that the child, until its rebirth in baptism, is enrolled under Satan's flag and subject to his natural dominion.

Hence, when the priest, in the prayer of exorcism before baptism, admonishes Satan to "go out and depart" from the child, he is not indulging in ecclesiastical rhetoric or repeating the tags of ancient superstition; he is speaking the language of stark realism. Whence it is easy to understand the desire of the Church that children should be baptised as soon as possible, to put them beyond Satan's power, and enroll them in the supernatural kingdom of Christ.

So far we have been considering the effects resulting from original sin, as regards this life. We have now to see what effects it will have upon the soul's destiny in the next life. For the sake of clearness we shall take the case of the soul that passes into the other world, unstained by actual sin, but yet still burdened with original sin. Though some who come to the full use of reason may die in this condition, which is a matter of dispute among theologians, it is evident that the question principally concerns children who die without baptism, and in view of their immense numbers, it is of great practical interest and importance. Opponents of the Church, neglecting her authoritative pronouncements and the general and current teachings of her theologians, are given to seizing upon some opinion held by Saint Augustine of some other early father, to putting this individual view forward as representative of Catholic doctrine, and then denouncing this as harsh, inhuman, and incompatible with God's loving mercy.

We do not deny that some of the early fathers or later theologians may have spoken about this matter in terms of exaggeration, or held opinions that to us seem harsh and unreasonable, especially when they were excited by the denials of heretics, with whom controversy was often violent and bitter, and led, not seldom, to over-statements on both sides. Notwithstanding the reverence due to these earlier champions of the faith, and the authority and prestige rightly attaching to their names and teachings, it must be borne always in mind that no father and no doctor is infallible; and where the Church has spoken, or even shown the bent of her mind, it is not only our right but our duty to throw over even an Athanasius or an Augustine, if his teaching is not wholly at one with hers.

On this present question the Church has had occasion to make clear

certain points of her faith, sometimes when issuing conciliar decrees, sometimes when publishing condemnations of erroneous doctrines. In the Council of Florence, A. D. 1439, which effected a short-lived reunion between the Church and the schismatical Easterns, she included as an article of her creed the affirmation that "the souls of those who depart from this life, either in actual mortal sin or in original sin only, go down at once into hell, there however to suffer disparate penalties." In 1567 Pope Saint Pius V condemned a number of propositions taken from the writings of Michael Bay of Louvain; among them is one asserting that the unbaptised child, attaining the use of his reason after death, will actually hate and blaspheme God and set himself against God's law. In 1794 Pius VI condemned a great many of the errors propounded by the Erastian synod recently held at Pistoia in Tuscany, among them being the "doctrine that rejects as a Pelagian fable that part of the lower regions (generally known as the limbo of infants) in which the souls of those dying in original sin alone are punished with the pain of loss (i.e., of the beatific vision) without the pain of fire. . . ."

From these pronouncements we draw the following conclusions: unbaptised children are deprived of the beatific vision of God, which is man's true final end; this is a part of the defined Catholic faith. It is certain that they neither hate nor blaspheme God nor rebel against his law, and it is, at least, most improbable that they suffer from the fire of hell or any sort of positive, sensible pain; while, on the contrary, it is most likely that their state is one of true peace and natural happiness. The dogma of faith is clearly contained in Christ's words to Nicodemus: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," (John 3:5) and is, also, the direct theological consequence of all that has been said about the nature of original sin. This consists primarily in the privation of sanctifying grace, which is the principle of divine sonship, and, hence, the necessary condition for entry into God's eternal kingdom. ‘The beatific vision is the full flowering of grace; when the soul in grace is freed from the bonds of flesh and cleansed from its lesser impurities and from the debts it owes to God's justice, it passes naturally into glory. Where, however, the bud has not formed no flower can bloom.

On the other hand, there is no ecclesiastical authority for the

opinion, now almost universally rejected, that the child who dies unbaptised suffers any pain of sense, that is, any positive punishment such as is inflicted upon those who die with unforgiven, actual, mortal sins upon their souls. On this point Catholic doctors and theologians have not always been in full agreement among themselves. Saint Augustine, for example, held that such children would suffer some sort of positive pain, though he admitted that he did not know how or what, and was, as a rule, careful to add that it would be of a kind very light and easy to bear. He was followed by many in the West, whereas the Greek fathers, generally, were inclined to the view that these children suffer nothing except the pain of loss or deprivation of the beatific vision. The theological reason for this opinion, which is now held by all, is clearly explained by Saint Thomas: "The punishment," he writes, "bears a proportion to the sin. Now in actual sin there is, first, the turning away from God, the corresponding punishment being the loss of the beatific vision; and secondly, the inordinate cleaving to some created good, and the punishment corresponding with this is the pain of sense. But in original sin there is no inordinate cleaving to created good, . . . and therefore it is not punished by the pain of sense." (*Quaest. Disp., De Malo, v, a. 2.*)

From this follows our third conclusion, to wit, that it is most probable that the state of unbaptised children in the next world is one of peace and natural happiness. Since they do not suffer any pain of sense, and since they do not hate God or set themselves against his law, the only thing that could trouble their peace or spoil their happiness would be a sorrow or anguish resulting from the knowledge of the supernatural happiness for which they were intended, but which is for ever lost to them. Some eminent theologians, as the Blessed Cardinal Bellarmine, have held that they do suffer in this way. Apart from the authority of some of the fathers, their main reason for thinking thus is that the child will see and understand his loss and therefore grieve over it. Saint Thomas, however, denies this and his reasoning seems conclusive. (*Quaest, Disp., De Malo, v, a. 3.*) It is based on the truth, fundamental in Catholic theology, that grace and, therefore, the possession of the beatific vision, which is the final culmination of grace, are absolutely and in the strictest sense of the word supernatural. They not only exceed man's natural powers of attainment, but also and

equally his natural powers of knowing. It is impossible for a man to know, by natural reason alone, without the help of revelation and the gift of faith, that his final happiness consists in the immediate sight and possession of God. Consequently unbaptised children, not having received the sacrament of faith, have not the supernatural knowledge, without which they cannot know what they have lost. Hence their loss causes them no anguish of soul.

Although these considerations may bring some little consolation to the Catholic mother grieving over the fate of her child who has died unbaptised, they will not relieve the weight upon her conscience, should hers have been the fault, or free parents from the obligation to have their children baptised as soon as possible, since there is no measure or proportion between the natural happiness that will be their lot in limbo, and the inconceivable felicity of heaven, of which man's carelessness may so easily deprive them. Moreover, it must be clearly understood that the child dying without baptism is definitely lost. He is not in some midway state between salvation and damnation. He was made for one end only, a supernatural end; and failure to reach that, whether the fault be his own or another's, is complete failure, is eternal loss, even though unaccompanied by the positive tortures of a soul that has wilfully damned itself.

To conclude this short study of the fall and original sin, we may call attention to the fact that the whole of it is based upon the truth and the reality and the supernatural character of sanctifying grace. Without this the fall becomes a myth and original sin an absurdity. Consequently, since the most fundamental error of Protestantism is its denial of the reality or its grievous misunderstanding of the nature of grace, Protestant theology is always hopelessly at sea and at loggerheads with itself when dealing with original sin.

Again, the dependence of the dogma of the fall and original sin upon the reality of grace at once puts this dogma into its place among those that are essentially mysterious. It is beyond the power of our reason fully to understand it, or even to prove its existence. This we know only by revelation. But once it is accepted it makes nearly everything else clear. The fall explains the life and death of Jesus Christ, and the whole sacramental system. Without original sin the Church, which is the permanent means established by God

to make good the damage done by Adam's sin, would be a useless encumbrance, and without the Church religion, in the full meaning of the word, would soon flounder and disappear. And even the history of the world, especially that of the chosen people, can only be properly understood in the light of this dogma. Mysterious, then, as it is, it is lit up and made easy of belief by all around us, by everything that touches us most nearly; unpalatable as it may be to our natural taste, it is sweetened by its necessary connection with all those things that are our greatest joy in this world and our only hope for the next.

About This EBook

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The cover image is a detail of a stained glass window of Adam and Eve, date and artist unknown. It was originally in West Riddleston Hall in Riddleston, England, and is now is the stained glass gallery in the Cliffe Castle Museum in Keighley, West Yorkshire, England. It was photographed on 25 May 2009 by Linda Spashett, and the image swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

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